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ABSTRACT

The COMPASS (Comprehensive Personal Assessment System) Test Battery used in personalized teacher education programs at the University of Texas (Austin) is described. The battery contains seven instruments, four of which provide data that can be used by computer programs to generate verbal-graphic summary reports. The seven instruments are: Biographical Information Form, Adjective Self Description, Self-Report Inventory, Concerns of Teachers, Directed Imagination, One-Word Sentence Completion, and Student Evaluation of Teaching. Student reactions to the Adjective Self-Description instrument verbal-graphic summary reports were as follows: about 80% felt that the reports were easy to understand, interesting, and informative; 85% said they would like detailed interpretation of the results; but less than half felt that the reports helped them in self-discovery. Preference as to mode of feedback showed that students who were sensitizers preferred the personal interview, whereas the repressers preferred feedback by mail. Since the report generators are not designed to produce documents that can be given directly to students, the important benefits are believed to depend on individual interpretation and interchange with a professional counselor. The compiled normative data, in particular, those relating to the sentence completion instrument, have been found to be invaluable for training counselors of students in teacher education. (DB)

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COMPUTER-GENERATED ASSESSMENT REPORTS IN PERSONALIZED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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For the last ten years every student enrolled in the introductory course in Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin has been given a battery of psychological assessment instruments. In the early years of the program the data were used solely for research purposes. The projects using the data were concerned with enhancement of the mental health status of teachers in training, but it soon became obvious that personal counseling, based heavily on feedback of the summarized assessment data, could have very beneficial effects on the teacher training process itself.

What has emerged from these years of research is an assessment program with purposes and procedures which differ significantly from those of the usual "selection-retention" testing context. The goal of the program is enhanced self-understanding on the part of the student--particularly with regard to potential interactions of personal characteristics and the variety of demands of the teaching role. The self-report nature of the instrumentation precludes use of the data to select students into teacher education, even if such a process were consistent with our philosophy.

Rather, we believe that almost every kind of student can become an effective teacher of some subject matters at some grade levels with some kinds of students. We believe that personal counseling can help most students to explore their potentials before practicum experiences begin, and can help them to make the most of those experiences during the training

program. The assessment data provide a systematic core of information with which the counselor and student can begin this process of exploration.

The COMPASS Battery

The term "COMPASS" stands for "Comprehensive Personal Assessment System," and by way of a bad pun emphasizes the purpose of guidance and exploration, rather than mechanical selection.

The current set of instruments has evolved gradually with the research projects that supported the assessment program. After the first few years we discarded long inventories such as the 16PF and CPI because of the excessive time demand relative to their value in a counseling context. For the same reason we came to rely more on verbal free-response and semi-structured methods, which are better suited to discussion with the student during an interview.

Seven instruments are included in the present battery, four of which provide data which can be used by computer programs to generate verbal-graphic summary reports. The hand-out contains examples of these computer-generated reports.

Biographical Information Form. This form provides background information about the student's family, health, high school and work experiences, and also asks for self-assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses relevant to teaching.

Adjective Self Description. This form contains 56 adjectives with 5-point self-rating scales. The words represent seven factors derived from Gough's Adjective Check List. A verbal-graphic summary report showing normative ranges for the scales can be computer-generated.

Self-Report Inventory. This 48-statement form measures attitudes

toward eight areas of the respondent's personal world. It also provides data that can be used to produce a verbal-graphic summary report.

Concerns of Teachers. The student is asked to list those things that concern him at present in regard to the teaching role. Responses can be scored by judges with regard to a theoretical hierarchy of concerns.

Directed Imagination. The student is given four minutes each to write four fictional stories about teachers and their experiences. The data are usually interpreted clinically, but can also be rated for certain features through use of a scoring manual.

One-Word Sentence Completion. This form was designed to yield single-word responses to 62 sentence stems, so that computer processing would be feasible. A word-root "dictionary" pre-coded for a set of six broad constructs is used by a computer program to generate summary reports from protocols which have been punched verbatim on cards. The original protocols can also be interpreted ideographically by the counselor.

Student Evaluation of Teaching. At whatever points in the teacher training program that the student enters a practicum setting, this 10-item form can be given to the pupils to record their views of the student-teacher's classroom behavior. The forms can be compiled by hand or by a computer program that generates a verbal summary report.

Student Reactions to Assessment Reports

In a recent dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin, Thad Eckman obtained evaluations of the verbal-graphic summary reports derived from the Adjective Self-Description instrument. A group of 69 female students were also given Byrne's Repression-Sensitization scale--a defense-mode measure.

About 80% of the group said the reports were easy to understand, interesting and informative. Eighty-five percent said they would like detailed interpretation of the results. On the other hand, less than half the group felt that the reports helped them discover anything new about themselves.

As expected, the sensitizers were generally less positive toward the reports than the repressers. Of particular interest was the way these two subgroups ranked three potential modes of feedback of results: (1) by mail, (2) general interpretation in class, and (3) personal interview with counselor. The sensitizers would prefer the personal interview, while the repressers would prefer the mail procedure.

The group was retested with the ASD following an extensive explanation of the instrument in the class by Dr. Eckman. Only minor changes were noted, more with sensitizers than with repressers. There was a suggestion that the feedback enabled some sensitizers to express their feelings more accurately with the test.

Assessment Feedback

In the context of a personalized teacher education program where test results are fed back to students during personal counseling interviews, we have emphasized brief instruments that are capable of rapid computer scoring. The report generators are not designed to produce documents which can be given directly to students. We believe that the important benefits of such feedback depend on individual interpretation and interchange with a professional counselor.

In this connection it should be noted that the professional counselor in this setting must not only be familiar with teaching roles

in all their variety, he must also be familiar with the normative characteristics of the assessment instruments. Particularly in the case of the sentence completion instrument, we have found that the compiled normative data we have collected over the years are invaluable for training counselors of students in teacher education.